

Staining Hardwood Floors

- What's Involved?

By Tadas Sadunas

Staining a hardwood floor is the most challenging process in wood floor restoration work.

We have to prepare the floor in a very precise manner to evenly accept the stain. This involves *far more* time and effort compared to keeping the floor in its natural state.

If you don't know what you're doing or don't take the needed time, things can go wrong very quickly which usually means a total re-sand and more wood being removed from your floors.

That's why there are many refinishers out there that won't even take on a staining job. We have many years of experience staining hardwood and are very confident in the quality of our staining work.

If you don't know what you're doing or don't take the needed time, things can go wrong very quickly...

So why is it so much extra work?

Well, when we sand a hardwood floor, we use two different types of sanders. The big belt sander sands in a straight line, up and down the

length of the room. The smaller sander – called an edger – sands in a circular motion around the perimeter of the room.

When a floor is kept natural (no stain), we only need to use a buffer to blend the difference between the belt sander's straight sanding marks and the edger's circular marks. If this is done properly, when the finish is applied the marks are barely visible.

But... if we were to apply stain over a floor prepared in this manner, you would see sanding marks everywhere!

To remove those marks, we need to do two other steps to prep the floor, 1) a finer sand with a machine called a TRIO and 2) we use smaller

hand sanders around the edges. After we have finished with the four machines, we carefully hand sand the corners and perimeters of the rooms, a very tedious job but one that makes our stained floors stand out from others.

Once the floor is sanded, we then need to mask off any areas (carpet, baseboards, transitions etc.) that won't be stained.

Then we go through a process called 'water popping'. This raises the grain and removes most of the very small remaining marks. It also allows the stain to be accepted more evenly.

After a floor is water-popped, it is extremely delicate.

Now comes the hardest part of the process. It involves our crew working extremely fast, applying and blending the stain very consistently over the floor, all the time being *extremely* careful not to mark the delicate floor.

If the stain isn't blended properly, then there will be lap marks visible. If one of us drags our foot across the 'water-popped' floor, it will leave a mark that won't come out short of re-sanding. As you can imagine, this is quite stressful.

The floor then needs to sit for at least 12 hours, sometimes longer depending on the product or color, before we put on the first coat of finish.

So now you see why we need to charge more for staining floors—it's almost twice the work... but well worth the beautiful results achieved.

It's especially important to ask for references from previous customers if you are considering staining your floors.

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